

Elm Brae, 15 Church Lane, Kirk Ella



Elm Brae, 15 Church Lane, Kirk Ella (2020)

The blue plaque on the house in the above picture, placed there by Kirk Ella and West Ella Parish Council, informs us that the house was “built late 18th century as Elms Estate workers cottages. Subsequently a hospital for casualties of the Hull to Barnsley Railway construction completed 1885. Described as a Nurses’ Homes by 1888.”

The exact date the house was built has not been discovered, although the blue plaque on the building states that its construction dates from the late 18th century. The east “wing” (on the right of the above picture) and the garage are later extensions. At the heart of the Elms Estate was Elmtree House, a substantial mansion house, later known as The Elms (now demolished). Originally built in the early eighteenth century by Robert Bell, a Hull merchant, Elmtree House was lived in by a succession of wealthy businessmen and their families.



The Elms (formerly Elmtree House) c1920

During the second half of the 19th century, The Elms (as it may have become known by then) was occupied by John Smythe Egginton, his wife, Mary Ann, and at least eight children. In 1879, during his tenure, the house on the other side of Church Lane, later known as Elm Brae,

opened as Kirk Ella Cottage Hospital and was supported financially by Martha Dorothea “Dora” Barkworth, wife of John Boulderson Barkworth, Timber Merchant of Kingston-upon-Hull. They lived at Raywell House and, in 1871, had 14 domestic servants, including a butler and two footmen. The Barkworths were members of a wealthy and influential local family, many of whom are buried in the churchyard of St. Andrew’s Church, Kirk Ella. Those who lived at Tranby House (now part of Hessle High School) were the most prominent.

A committee of ladies was appointed to be responsible for the running of the hospital and, in 1882, the Matron was Mrs. Eleanor Owen with a staff of five. At this time, work on the construction of the Hull and Barnsley Railway¹ was well underway and with the work on the line having reached Riplingham tunnel, one of the nurses employed at the home spent most of the year 1883-84 at the workings on the Riplingham Tunnel. Her valued services to the sick were withdrawn only when that section of the line was completed. A coffee-house was also provided under Raywell Viaduct by Mrs. Barkworth, ‘to reduce the temptation to indulge in strong drink’ and to minimise the labourers’ predatory and poaching instincts. It proved, according to the *Beverley Guardian*, ‘an excellent navvy-tamer’. The hospital and any care they required were much appreciated by the navvies and their families, who showed their gratitude with a voluntary contribution of five guineas in 1882.

Railway construction was a hazardous occupation. In May 1881, soon after work began, there was a fall of earth at Eppleworth and one of the navvies was killed. The body of William Scrivener, a 70-year-old from Hull, was carried to The Wheatsheaf Inn on Packman Lane, Kirk Ella, and was later buried in Mill Lane Cemetery (although no headstone remains). There were five other accidents

¹ Known originally as The Hull, Barnsley and West Riding Junction Railway and Dock Company (formed in 1879)

resulting in casualties that summer and, on 25th October, the first wagon of the 'Mail', taking workers back to Newington overturned. Eighteen men and a boy, whose injuries were thought likely to be fatal, were taken for treatment to the Hull General Infirmary.

The spiritual needs of the navvies and their families were not neglected. A Navvies Mission was started with the appointment of Mr. George Davies as scripture reader in May 1881. From then until the construction team moved on, a service was held at 7 p.m. every Sunday in a tent. The Rev. James Foord, the Vicar of Kirk Ella, usually officiated. The tent was badly damaged by a storm in July and by the time it was repaired the evenings were drawing in. The doctor's hospital hut was commandeered and a paraffin lamp provided lighting. There were never more than ten men at the services, however, and the congregation of mainly women and children only once reached thirty.

Once the construction of the local section of the railway had been completed and the workforce had moved on, Elm Brae continued to provide nursing care for local people for some time afterwards. In Bulmer's 1892 Directory of East Yorkshire, Mrs. Sarah Frances Doran was the Matron, and the house is listed as a 'convalescent home for seven patients supported by Mrs. Dora Barkworth of South Lea, Avant, Hants'.² The Barkworths had left Raywell in 1890, when John Boulderson Barkworth moved south after he acquired the Woodlands Estate at South Leigh in Hampshire.

In 1893, The Elms changed hands when Dr. Arthur Wilson-Barkworth bought the house following the death of John Smythe Egginton. He and his wife, Emily, remained in the house until 1932. Although for some time, Elm Brae remained a home for nurses during his tenure, Dr. Wilson-Barkworth enlarged the

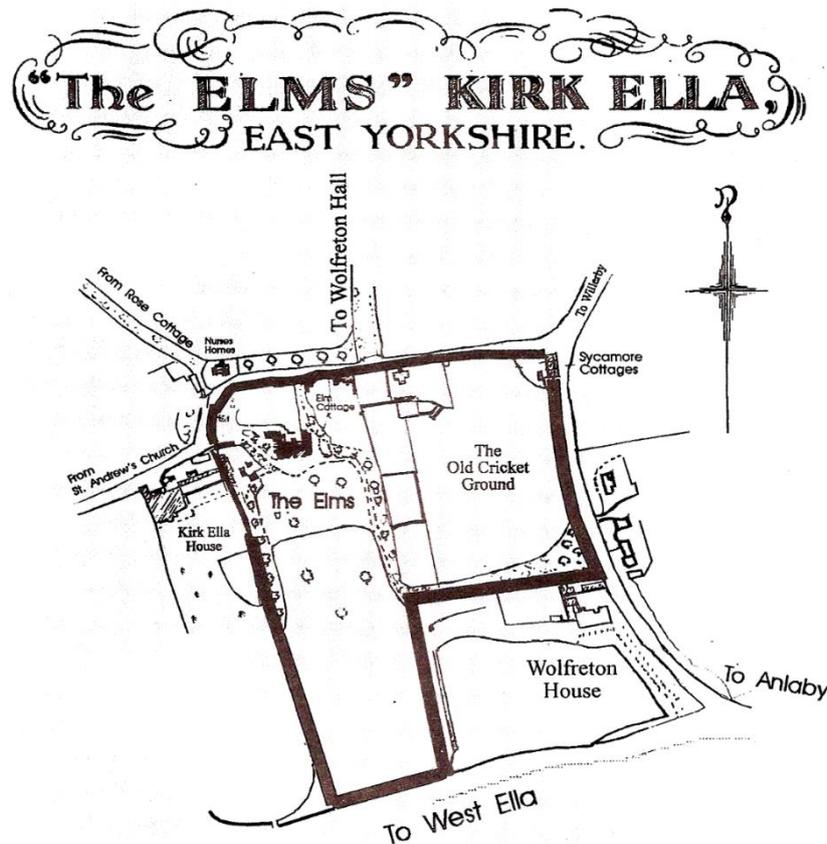


cottages on the estate, which extended over 22 acres, to eventually accommodate his gardener and coachman, a Mr. Camp, who lived at Elm Brae, and Mr Smith.

Elm Brae c 1920

² Should be 'South Leigh, Havant, Hants.'

When Arthur Wilson-Barkworth died in 1929 and his wife three years later, the whole of The Elms estate, including Elm Brae, was put up for sale. The plan below shows the extent of the main part of the estate at that time.³



Rose Cottage (also part of the estate) was accessed from a track leading off Church Lane next to Elm Brae. In 1978, a notice board went up announcing the sale of the small parcel of land forming the path. The upper part of the track was incorporated in the back gardens of houses being built on the west side of Annandale Road, while the few square metres next to Elm Brae provided the house with garage space. A narrow snicket was retained allowing access to Annandale Road.

Following the 1932 sale of The Elms estate, the main house was demolished and the houses on Elms Drive now occupy much of the former estate.

Elm Brae seems to now be divided into two separate residences with one or the other changing hands several times since 1990.

³ Note that Elm Brae is called Nurses' Homes on the plan.